



UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT
AND ECONOMICS

**REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER THESIS
IN BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT
PROGRAM**

2023-2024

Course code	GRAB010
Course title	Master thesis
Type of course	Compulsory
Stage of study	Graduate
ECTS	30 ECTS
Coordinating lecturer	Prof. Dr. Virginija Poškutė, e-mail: virpos@ism.lt
Study form	Full time
Language of instruction	English

The Master's Thesis is the culminating experience in graduate level education for Master degree candidates. It is an endeavour of analytical nature, which contains elements of originality and is performed in conformity with general requirements of academic papers and scholarly projects. For the student, the Master's thesis should be a learning activity that is stimulating and engenders a sense of pride and accomplishment.

There is an option to write a thesis with a colleague. It sometimes gets lonely and difficult to engage in this important project all by yourself. If you decide to write a thesis with a colleague, please take this into consideration:

- Both students need to participate in thesis proposal and final thesis defences (if one of the students will not participate, they will be denied the right for the defence of thesis proposal and final thesis);
- Both students need to be able to explain and justify any choices of methods and information, defend any part of the thesis, such as the literature review, data measurement scales, questionnaires, choice of sampling, data collection process and data analysis results;
- Both students are responsible for academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism, copying another person's work);
- Both students have to be competent to answer any questions the thesis defence committee members ask. Saying things like „I don't know what this means because my teammate did this part“ or „this part is not done because my teammate was supposed to do it“ will only get you penalty points;
- Both students will be awarded the same grade for the thesis by supervisor, reviewer and the thesis defense committee members.

The intent of the thesis is to provide an opportunity for Master's degree candidates to refine, in some cases acquire, a range of skills at an appropriate level to do capable and competent research. A successful thesis is evidence that the candidate has acquired the minimum level of research skills required and can therefore be accredited a Master's degree. Skills required of thesis writers are those associated with research design, data collection, information management, analysis of data, synthesis of data with existing knowledge and critical evaluation of the writer's own ideas and those presented in the literature reviewed. The thesis should be written in English, within a given period of time and comply with commonly accepted principles of academic ethics.

Since you are graduating from the program in Business Sustainability Management, your topic needs to come from the areas that you have studied in the program. The topic needs to entail some sustainability management perspective. The topic can be interdisciplinary as well. All exceptions to the topic area must be discussed with the program director.

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The Master thesis should be between 15 000 and 20 000 words long, **excluding** the Title Page, Abstract, References and Appendices. It should be written in English and have a clear written style (some theses can be shorter than the required length – it all depends on the research question. If there is a need for a shorter thesis, it needs to be discussed and approved by the Program Director). The thesis should be formatted according to the APA style requirements which can be found on ISM e-Learning system named *Formatting and Citing Requirements of Academic Papers, APA Style Summary* or at <http://www.apa.org/> .

The Master thesis should include the following elements (see the recommended volume in brackets):

- Title Page
- Abstract (up to 200 words)
- Table of Contents (1-2 pages)
- List of Figures and/or List of Tables (1 page)
- List of the main concepts' definitions (1 page)
- Introduction (~1000 words)
- Literature Review (5000- 6000 words)
- Research Methodology (2000-3000 words)
- Empirical Research Results (2000-3000 words)
- Discussion (4000-6000 words)
- Conclusions (~1000 words)
- References
- Appendices

LEARNING OUTCOMES

LO1. Able to identify a research problem and formulate a research question or hypothesis.

LO2. Ability to select appropriate scientific sources and analyse them critically.

LO3. Able to develop empirical research design and conduct research ethically.

LO4. Able to analyse the empirical research results and develop scientific discussion.

LO5. Able to communicate research results fluently in writing and orally.

CONTENT OF THE THESIS

TITLE PAGE – is the cover page of the whole thesis and it should include (please see *Appendix 4* for the example):

- The title should be written using all capital letters, centered within the left and right margins, and spaced about 3 cm from the top of the page.
- Below the title, at the vertical and horizontal center of the margins, place the following five lines (all centered):
 - Line 1: A Thesis
 - Line 2: Presented to the Faculty
 - Line 3: ISM University of Management and Economics
 - Line 4: in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

- Line 5: Master's in Business Sustainability Management

Center the following three lines within the margins:

- Line 1: by
- Line 2: [name under which you are registered in the University Studies Office]
- Line 3: [month and year the thesis is submitted; no comma between month and year]

The text on the Title Page should be Times New Roman, size 12, double space.

ABSTRACT – is the first substantive description of the paper read by an external reader. You should view it as an opportunity to set accurate expectations. The Abstract is a summary of the whole thesis as it presents all the major elements of your work in a highly condensed form. Also the Abstract often functions, together with the thesis title, as a stand-alone text. This section is not merely an introduction in the sense of a preface, preamble, or advance organizer that prepares the reader for the thesis. In addition to that function, it must be capable of substituting for the whole thesis when there is insufficient time and space for the full text.

The Abstract can not exceed one page and it usually is about 150 words. The structure of the Abstract should mirror the structure of the whole thesis and should represent all its major elements. For example, if your thesis has five chapters (introduction, literature review, methodology, results, conclusion), there should be one or more sentences assigned to summarize each chapter.

The most common error in abstracts is failure to present results. The primary function of your thesis (and by extension your Abstract) is not to tell readers what you did, **it is to tell them what you discovered**. Other information, such as the account of your research methods, is needed mainly to back the claims you make about your results. Approximately the last half of the Abstract should be dedicated to summarizing and interpreting your results.

TABLE OF CONTENTS – should provide the reader with the exact structure of the whole paper. The Table of Contents should list the chapter headings, appendices, references and the pages on which they can be found.

INTRODUCTION – is the first major chapter of the thesis. It should set out the background of the research study and address the following areas:

- Background Information
 - What is the background and/or the context of research?
 - What is the main subject of research?
- Research Question, Goal and Objectives
 - What is the central research question that the thesis will address?
 - What is the central research goal that you will try to achieve in the paper?
 - How will the set research goal be reached? Through what specific objectives?
- Novelty of the Topic
 - Why is this subject important/novel in practical terms?
 - Why is this subject important/novel in theoretical terms?
- Research Design
 - What research design is going to be used in the thesis?
- Sequence of the Thesis
 - What topics are going to be discussed in each of the chapters?
 - How do the chapters of your thesis relate to each other?

The chosen thesis topic is required to be from **sustainability management field**. The topic could be interdisciplinary, for example from finance and sustainability management, however even then one of the fields is required to be sustainability management.

LITERATURE REVIEW - is a description of the literature relevant to a particular field or topic. It gives an overview of what has been said, who the key writers are, what are the prevailing theories and hypotheses, what questions are being asked, and what methods and methodologies are appropriate and useful. As such, it is not in itself primary research, but rather it reports on other findings. Generally, the purpose of a review is to analyze critically a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary, classification, and comparison of prior research studies, reviews of literature, and theoretical articles. Generally, the Literature Review follows this structure:

- *Introduction* where you:
 - Define or identify the general topic, issue, or area of concern, thus providing an appropriate context for reviewing the literature.
 - Point out overall trends in what has been published about the topic; or conflicts in theory, methodology, evidence, and conclusions; or gaps in research and scholarship; or a single problem or new perspective of immediate interest.
 - Establish the writer's reason (point of view) for reviewing the literature; explain the criteria to be used in analyzing and comparing literature and the organization of the review (sequence); and, when necessary, state why certain literature is or is not included (scope).
- *Body of the Literature Review* where you:
 - Group research studies and other types of literature (reviews, theoretical articles, case studies, etc.) according to common denominators such as qualitative versus quantitative approaches, conclusions of authors, specific purpose or objective, chronology, etc.
 - Summarize individual studies or articles with as much or as little detail as each merits according to its comparative importance in the literature, remembering that space (length) denotes significance.
 - Provide the reader with strong "umbrella" sentences at beginnings of paragraphs, "signposts" throughout, and brief "so what" summary sentences at intermediate points in the review to aid in understanding comparisons and analyses.
- *Conclusion* where you:
 - Summarize major contributions of significant studies and articles to the body of knowledge under review, maintaining the focus established in the Introduction.
 - Clearly and concisely state **the research problem** and clearly define all relevant concepts.
 - Evaluate the current "state of the art" for the body of knowledge reviewed, pointing out major methodological flaws or **gaps in research**, inconsistencies in theory and findings, and areas or issues pertinent to future study. Please note that here **you are making a significant contribution** to science by pointing what other scholars have failed to notice, have not considered, or assessed inaccurately in their works.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY - is based on the research problem, the theoretical framework of the study, and the purpose of the study. It should provide sufficient detail to suggest recommendations to answer the research questions. The purpose of this chapter is to assure the reader that the type of research design is justified and appropriate for the desired outcomes. Typically, this chapter includes:

- Research Design
 - Share your research design by providing:
 - A clear elaboration and presentation of the topic's theoretical framework.
 - Description of how the problem relates to the theoretical framework.
 - Demonstrate how the problem relates to previous planning or social policy research.
 - Present alternate hypothesis within the framework of the theory.
 - Specify that the research for the thesis is experimental, quasi-experimental, correlational, causal-comparative, quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, or another design. Be specific. The designated approach should be defended by contrasting and comparing it with alternate methods and rejecting those that do not meet the needs of the study. This section should not be a textbook description of various research designs, but a focused effort to match a rational research design with the purpose of the study.
 - Operationalize each of the identified concepts. Identify and distinguish between independent and dependent variables.
 - Discuss the possible weaknesses of the research design.
- Setting and Participants
 - What is the context for the empirical research?
 - What is the sample? How was the sample selected?
- Instrumentation
 - What specific instruments are going to be used to collect data?
 - How specifically was the data collected?

If Internet surveys are used for data collection, the rule of one questionnaire filled in from one IP address should apply. Under request, the advisor or anyone formally assessing the thesis should be granted access to the data management webpage to check the authenticity of the source and numbers of submitted questionnaires. Accessed data can be used only for preventing plagiarism and cheating. If anonymity of sources is required, the accessing person is obliged to maintain it. The same is applied to qualitative data. Students, upon the request, should be ready to provide the original records of data.

When you deal with personal or private information (e.g. through interviews and surveys), you must obtain explicit consents from all stakeholders regarding their participation and anonymity preferences to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 of the European Union. You must inform the stakeholders that your supervisor(s), programme director, and the defence committee will have access to such information. Also, you must request the stakeholders to reveal any conflicts of interest prior to obtaining their consents.

- Ethical Considerations
 - Are there any ethical issues with the research design? If yes, what are they and how they will be overcome?
- Internal and External Validity Considerations
 - How is external validity ensured?
 - How is internal validity ensured?

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS – is the chapter where you should report the empirical research findings, based on collection and analysis of primary and secondary data sources. Typically, it is suggested to organize this chapter around answering the main research question and/or testing the hypotheses. Make sure you follow some key guidelines and/or a clear pattern when presenting your research results. Some results will need to be presented in a narrative form while others in tables, graphs, and figures.

You only need to summarize and emphasize the most significant findings of your research. Irrelevant details or any discussion of the theory should not be included in this chapter.

If you have collected quantitative data, you are required to submit initial, raw data in the format of SPSS or Excel files at the end of thesis writing process. Printed version of initial data is not required, and you do not need to include it in the thesis. If you see the need to include some raw results in your thesis, please do that in the Appendices. Still, it is advised to include only processed and summarized data in the Appendices.

If you have collected qualitative data, you should provide scripts of interviews and focus groups in a summarized way (for example, data matrix or structured descriptions) in Appendices. All transcripts (audio or Word format) should be uploaded with the final thesis at the end of the thesis writing process and it should be in English. If data is confidential, you should find ways to anonymize the source and not the data.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS – serves to bring the research to an end, one that follows logically from the central theme of the thesis and the topical paragraphs. A conclusion that flows gracefully and logically from what has come before it reinforces the findings of the research and generally enhances the validity of the arguments and positions taken by the writer. Usually, this chapter has two main components:

- Discussion where you:
 - Synthesize the literature review and empirical research findings in a meaningful way.
 - Overview the significant findings of your empirical research.
 - Consider your findings in the light of existing research studies (as reviewed in the Literature Review chapter).
 - State what are the implications of your study for current theory.
 - State what are the managerial implications of your study.
 - Examine research findings that fail to support or only partially support your hypotheses.
 - Name the limitations of the study that may affect the validity or the generalizability of the results.
- Conclusion where you:
 - Summarize the main points of the thesis.
 - Ask for awareness, action, or similar resolution from readers.
 - Look ahead to future research, developments in the field or paradigm shifts.
 - Do not introduce new facts or ideas that belong in the chapters discussing the findings.
 - Do not reword the Introduction and present it as the conclusion.
 - Do not restate what you have done. Avoid statements such as “in this paper I have discussed the relationship between a states per capita income and per pupil expenditures for education.”

REFERENCES – is a list of sources that you used in your thesis. Make sure that all the sources listed in the thesis are included in the References and vice versa. References list should be prepared according to the APA guidelines.

References should include at least 50 academic (peer-reviewed) sources.

APPENDICES – may include figures and tables or any additional information that would have interrupted the flow of the main body of the thesis. Make sure that you refer to each appendix and explain what it contains in the main text of the thesis.

ROLE OF THE THESIS ADVISOR

The task of the thesis advisor is to guide you through the thesis writing process. Active guidance is understood as sharing experience; providing examples (best practices) and support in research design, analysis of research data, and general issues.

In general, the advisor is expected:

- Meet with you after each important chapter submission;
- Consult you on the thesis requirements and draw up a general thesis writing plan;
- Advise you in finding/formulating the research topic, goal and hypotheses;
- Advise you in writing each part of the thesis;
- Provide feedback and comments about the quality of each thesis chapter.

In general, the advisor is NOT permitted to:

- Provide you with (a list of) sources/ literature;
- Correct or edit the grammar/ writing style;
- Formulate entire sentences or parts of the thesis;
- Teach methods of statistical data analysis;
- Suggest precise formulations of text (problem, aims, objectives, hypotheses, etc.).

A relationship between you and the advisor:

- Any initiative has to come from the student and NOT from the advisor;
- The advisor should challenge you to strive for a higher quality level and recommend to you what can be improved – but the advisor shall NOT do anything what would be considered as an attempt to co-author the thesis;
- As the advisor will be asked to grade the quality of the thesis as well as the level of cooperation – any active role in the thesis writing process would be considered as a violation of academic integrity/ conflict of interest;
- The advisor should provide feedback on the submitted parts of the FBT within 5 working days (if not agreed otherwise with you).

Coordination between the advisor and the administration/program director:

- The advisor has to report to the program director if you do not fulfill the requirements on time/ violate the regulations on thesis writing. In case of disregard, the advisor will be made personally responsible for any problems which occur;
- The advisor is NOT responsible for the incorrect usage of sources, incorrect reporting of data, copyright infringements made by you.

ASSESSMENT OF THE THESIS

The final grade of the Master thesis is made up from the advisor, reviewer and thesis defense committee grades. Here is how the grade is calculated:

Advisor	20%
Reviewer	20%
Thesis Défense Committee	60%

Both the Advisor and the Reviewer evaluate the thesis based on the following criteria.

Introduction	5%
Literature Review	25%
Research Methodology	15%
Empirical Research Results	25%
Discussion and Conclusions	15%
General Outlook	15%

Each thesis defense committee member evaluates the defense according to the following criteria:

Content	40%
Defense presentation of the Master Thesis	20%
Answers to the defense committee members questions	40%

IMPORTANT

By decision of the Studies Commission and following approval of Vice-President for Studies, you may be denied the opportunity to prepare and defend the Master thesis, if:

1. The Studies Commission has not approved the topic of the relevant final thesis;
2. The student has failed to adhere to the approved thesis preparation deadlines;
3. The thesis advisor has assigned a negative grade;
4. The thesis reviewer has assigned the negative grade;
5. The student has violated academic ethics;
6. Thesis does not meet the formal requirements (structure, size etc.)
7. The student has failed to upload each part of the thesis to the e-learning system on time.
8. The final thesis demonstrates significant changes in the expected outcomes when compared to the approved thesis proposal.

DATE	WHAT TO DO?	HOW TO DO IT?	HOW TO SUBMIT IT?	WHERE TO SUBMIT IT?
April 5 th (By 6 pm)	Submission of a Preliminary Thesis Topic	Submit a Master Thesis Registration Form (<i>Appendix 1</i>) ¹ where you specify your preliminary Thesis topic.	Electronic copy ²	http://elearning.ism.lt/
April 19 th	Appointment of Thesis Advisors	The Studies Manager will announce who your thesis advisor is and provide you with his/her contact information.		
June 4 th (By 6 pm)	Submission of a Thesis Proposal	<p>Submit a Thesis Proposal (about 3500 - 4000 words) where you include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Thesis topic</i> • <i>Thesis problem definition</i> (including current state of knowledge about the problem (theoretical basis of research) and significance of the proposed study) • <i>Thesis goal and objectives</i> (form may vary from declarative statement of intent, research question(s), or hypothesis formulation and must be congruent with underlying conceptualization of the research problem) • <i>Research design</i> (including justification of selected method(s) of research) • <i>Methods of data collection and analysis</i> • <i>Sequence</i> in which the intended research will be carried out. • <i>Bibliography</i> (list of major references) <p>Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.</p>	Electronic copy	Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/
June 5-6 th	Defence of a Thesis Proposal	<p>Every student is required to defend their thesis proposal. The purpose of the defence is to check whether you are on the right track and to provide advice otherwise. If a student fails to defend thesis proposal, additional defence is organised.</p> <p>A defence for BSM students is taken place as part of Data Collection Research Methods module, on the last days of the module. Please see the module's syllabus for more details.</p>		
June 12 th (By 6 pm)	Submission of a Final Thesis Topic	<p>Submit a Master Thesis Topic Form (<i>Appendix 2</i>) where you specify your final thesis topic. Please make sure that your final topic is approved by your thesis advisor.</p> <p>Note that you can make only minor changes in your thesis topic after this date.</p>	Electronic copy	http://elearning.ism.lt/

¹ If you miss a deadline for any submission, the thesis writing process might be terminated by the Study Committee.

² All the interim chapters of the thesis and the final thesis should be uploaded **ONLY** in Word format.

DATE	WHAT TO DO?	HOW TO DO IT?	HOW TO SUBMIT	WHERE TO SUBMIT
September 5 6 pm – 7.30 pm (on campus)	Academic Writing Consultation	Academic writing consultation with Lilija Vilkančiene.		
September 23th (By 6 pm)	Submission of Introduction and Literature Review Chapters	Submit fully written Introduction and Literature Review chapters. Please note that your Thesis Proposal will serve as the basis for the Introduction chapter so consider your advisor's and defense committee comments and revise your Introduction accordingly. Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.	Electronic copy	Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/
September 24 th 6 pm – 9.15 pm (on campus)	Qualitative Research Methodology Seminar	Review of qualitative empirical research methodology with empirical research expert Dr. Eglė Verseckaitė Grzeskowiak and consultations concerning data collection methods		
October 3 rd 6 pm to 9.15 pm (on campus)	Quantitative Research Methodology Seminar	Review of quantitative empirical research methodology with empirical research expert Dr. Dovilė Barauskaitė and consultations concerning data collection methods		
October 10 th (By 18:00)	Submission of Research Methodology Chapter	Submit the Research Methodology chapter and revised Introduction and Literature Review chapters. Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.	Electronic copy	Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/
October 14 th – November 7 th	Individual Consultations with the Empirical Research Expert	The goal of the meeting is to receive advice on the research design, data collection and analysis methods. For individual consultations with research methodology expert please contact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative research - Dr. Eglė Verseckaitė Grzeskowiak by email eglver@faculty.ism.lt • Quantitative research – Dr. Dovilė Barauskaitė by e-mail dovbar@ism.lt <p>Please note that you must have a questionnaire ready when contacting the expert and arranging the consultation</p>		
November 15 (By 6 pm)	Submission of Empirical Research Results Chapter	Submit the Empirical Research Results chapter and revised Introduction, Literature Review and Research Methodology chapters. Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.	Electronic copy	Thesis Advisor and http://elearning.ism.lt/
December 3th (By 6 pm)	Submission of the Thesis to the Advisor	Submit the complete and formatted thesis to the advisor for feedback. Arrange a feedback meeting time with the thesis advisor.	Electronic copy	Studies Office and http://elearning.ism.lt/

December 10 th	Submission of the Thesis for plagiarism check	Submit the complete and formatted thesis on elearning	Electronic copy	http://elearning.ism.lt/
December 18 th (By 6 pm)	Submission of the Final Master Thesis	Submit the Final Master Thesis in the following way: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 (one) electronic copy of the Master Thesis submitted online • Empirical research raw data submitted online • A Signed Thesis Submission Form (<i>Appendix 3</i>). 	Electronic copy	http://elearning.ism.lt/
January 7 th (Time and place T.B.C)	Preparation for the Thesis Defense Seminar	Attend the Preparation for the Thesis Defense Seminar where you will be introduced to content and format requirements for the defense.		
January 9 th	Confirmation of Eligibility for the Public Master Thesis Defense	The Study committee announces the eligibility to defend the Master thesis decision.		
January 14-15 th (Time and place T.B.C)	Master Thesis Public Defense	Defend the thesis at the public defense.		

MASTER THESIS REGISTRATION FORM

(the form should be typewritten)

Surname and Name:
Master Program: Business Sustainability Management
Preliminary Thesis Topic (working title):
Research Problem and Intended Research Design (<i>please specify in 8-10 sentences</i>):
Thesis Advisor I would like to work with*: _____
(Surname, name, signature)
<i>*Please note the university is not obligated and does not guarantee that your indicated advisor will be assigned to you. However, the administrators of the process will try to respect your wishes.</i>

MASTER THESIS TOPIC FORM
(the form should be typewritten)

Surname and Name:	
Master Program: Business Sustainability Management	
Final Thesis Topic:	
Date:	Signature:
Advisor's Name and Signature:	

MASTER THESIS SUBMISSION FORM

(the form should be typewritten)

I hereby submit this Master Thesis as approved by my Advisor. In submitting my Thesis for inclusion in the University archive, I hereby certify that this Master Thesis represents my own work and has been written in accordance with commonly accepted principles of academic ethics as defined in ISM Regulations of Studies.

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Name, Last name

Signature

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Master Programme

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Master Thesis Title

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Advisor (Name, Last name)

December 18, 2025 18:00

Submission deadline

<p><i>To be completed by administration only.</i></p> <p>Confirmation of Thesis submission:</p> <p>Date: _____ Name, Last name: _____ Signature: _____</p>

Challenges of Sustainability Adoption in Clothing Industry

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty

of ISM University of Management and Economics

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Business Sustainability Management

by

Marius Mariukas

January 2025